

NOTE

First Records of the Sugarcane Pest, *Blastobasis graminea* Adamski  
(Lepidoptera: Coleophoridae: Blastobasinae), from Mexico and Central America

Although described only recently (Adamski 1999), *Blastobasis graminea* Adamski has been known as a pest of sugarcane (*Saccharum officinarum* Linnaeus; Poaceae) in Colombia and Venezuela for nearly 50 years (e.g., Box 1953, Guagliumi 1962). Cárdenas and Hernández (1988) described the biology of *B. graminea* in Colombia, and Adamski (1999) presented details of its morphology, along with illustrations of the adult, genitalia, larval chaetotaxy, and damage. Martorell (1976) reported two species of Blastobasinae feeding in flower heads of sorghum (*Sorghum aethiopicum* Hackel Ruprecht ex Stapf.; Poaceae) in the Virgin Islands, and it is possible that one of them represents *B. graminea*. Unfortunately, these specimens are presumably lost.

During a survey of sugarcane fields in central Mexico in February 2001, specimens of *B. graminea* were collected in the states of Veracruz and Jalisco. In Jalisco (Autlán and Casimiro Castillo), larvae of *B. graminea* were collected from young stalks of sugarcane at ground level, while in Veracruz (La Gloria), adults were collected using light-traps and blacklight. We assume that both of these collections represent resident pest populations in the sugarcane fields from which they were collected. Coincidentally, specimens of *B. graminea* (larvae and adults) recently were sent to the Systematic Entomology Laboratory for identification from Costa Rica, where they had been reared from sugarcane. These new records (from Mexico and Costa Rica) significantly broaden the known geographic range of *B. graminea* (Fig. 1).

At present, it is unknown whether the records from Costa Rica and Mexico represent a recent invasion of this species into Central

America, an old, previously undetected invasion, or a host switch by native *B. graminea* populations onto cultivated sugarcane. The fact that *B. graminea* has been reared from corn (*Zea mays* Linnaeus; Poaceae) and sorghum suggests that it has the potential to become a widespread pest throughout the lowlands of northern South America and Central America where these crops are cultivated. However, it seems that adequate time for this scenario to come to fruition has elapsed without the potential result. The fact that *B. graminea* also has been recorded from *Coix lacryma-jobi* Linnaeus (Poaceae) and *Setaria paniculifera* Fournier (Poaceae), two widespread native grasses, suggests that it already may have a broad native distribution in the region and has switched over to cultivated plants opportunistically in certain parts of its range. Regardless, the potential of *B. graminea* to become a more widespread and economically important pest of sugarcane seems high in light of the information presented herein. Furthermore, we recommend that future survey work be conducted for this insect in sugarcane producing areas of northern Mexico and southeastern United States where *B. graminea* is not known to occur at present.

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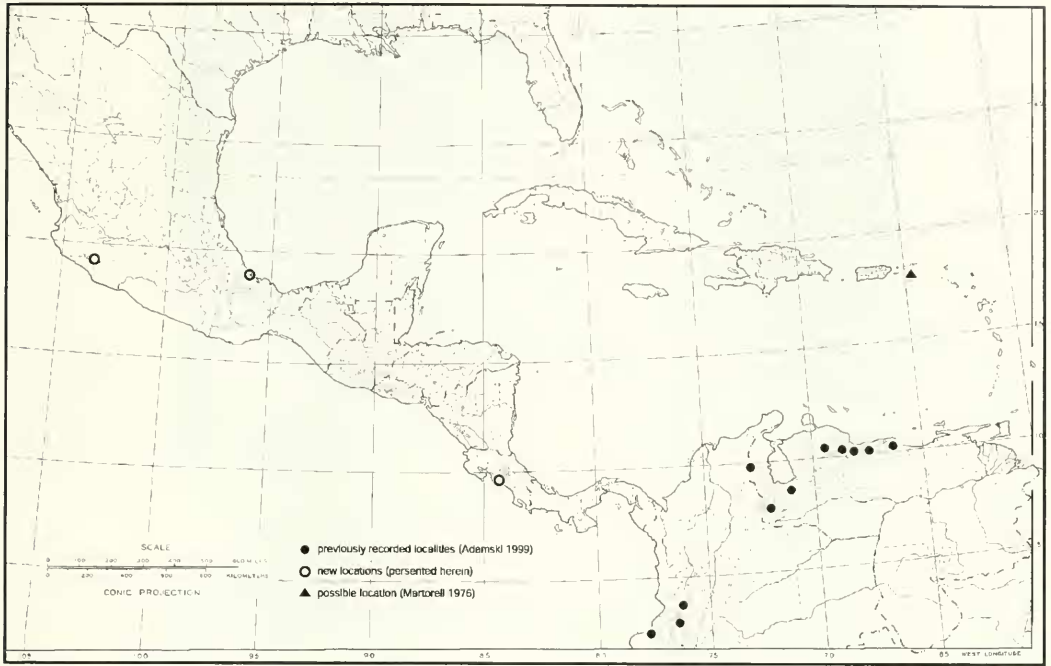


Fig. 1. Known distribution of *B. graminea*. Closed circles are previously reported locations (Adamski 1999); open circles are new locations (presented herein); triangle is possible location (Martorell 1976).

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